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MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT AMERICAN HISTORY HELD BY HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

Thesis

Submitted by

Paul Iliff Kelley

(B.S. in Education, Boston University, 1946)

In partial fulfillment of requirements for the
degree of Master of Education

1947

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer wishes to acknowledge sincere appreciation to William H. Cartwright, Assistant Professor of Education, Boston University, for his friendly guidance throughout the preparation of this material.

The writer is indebted to Doctor Robert E. Moody, Professor of History, Boston University; Doctor Samuel E. Morison, Professor of American History, Harvard University; Doctor Arthur M. Schlesinger, Professor of History, Harvard University; and to the high school agencies whose cooperation made this investigation possible.

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CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

At intervals for more than a century it has been noted by teachers of American history and historians that misapprehensions and misunderstandings about the subject exist in the minds of many students. Some of these misapprehensions and misunderstandings are nationwide; some are local in character. Some have been written into history textbooks; some pass on by word of mouth; others are simply inferred or taken for granted. The efforts of historians to overcome the perpetuation of misconceptions are praiseworthy and the efforts of the majority of the teachers toward the same end are commendable. The task of eradicating misconceptions is not simple: they are as persistent as are the old superstitions.

Statement of the Problem.

To state that misconceptions in American history exist in the minds of many of our students is but commonplace. What are some of these misconceptions--these so-called facts thought by many to be true but which are actually false? Can the prevalence of misconceptions be associated with age, sex, or any other method of group classification? The purpose of this study is to answer

these questions and to measure by means of an objective test the extent to which some common misconceptions about American history prevail in the high school senior class: the chief contention being that should certain misconceptions be widespread, then the teachers of American history would in the future take note of them and stress the truth in each case.

Review of Previous Research.

As early as 1845, Marcius Willson published A Critical Review of Common School Histories in which he devoted fifteen pages of the pamphlet to the poor accuracy of school history texts. He called attention to a great many specific errors in the common school history textbooks. The texts were corrected in most of the cited works where errors had been enumerated but the unexposed errors remained. This seems to indicate that any attempt at change must be specific. Willson in justifying the importance of correctness in texts said,

> "...it is from our common school histories... and not from those more elaborate writings...that the great mass of our citizens must ever derive their knowledge of the character, toils, and privations of our fathers, and of the origin and nature of our free institutions."[1]

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[1] Marcius Willson, A Critical Review..., New York, New York, Mark H. Newman, 1847, p. 1.

H. V. Boynton in 1875 wrote a book dealing with certain errors in American history during the Civil War period. Boynton who was the Washington correspondent of the Cincinnati Gazette based his review entitled *Sherman's Historical Raid*, upon compilations from the files of the war office. The object of the compilation was to show wherein the *Memoirs* of General Sherman fell

> "...far short of presenting the correct history of many great events of which they treat; how much they lack of giving a complete account of incidents which they relate; how far the author's recollection even when corrected by his own memoranda is at fault; and to furnish the future historian with facts which will guard him against perpetuating the error and injustice which pervade both volumes of the work."[2]

This is one of the earliest attempts in American history to correct error and do justice where error was uncorrected and injustice was done. This purpose may be seen from one of Boynton's numerous conclusions, "where the *Memoirs* [of Sherman] give the credit of the move on Forts Henry and Donelson to Halleck, the records show that it belongs to Grant."[3]

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[2] H. V. Boynton, *Sherman's Historical Raid*, Cincinnati:, Wilstach, Baldwin, 1875. p. 1

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 272.

Earle D. Ross, professor of history at the Illinois Wesleyan University, in 1918, commented on

> "...the widespread errors and misconceptions, prejudically and conventionally established regarding the past. It is incumbent upon the history teacher to be a fearless and relentless smasher of false images."[4]

The writer believes that we should treat our heroes as human beings, but not "debunk" them. Ross points this out in the following paragraph:

> "...one should not forget the conventional and traditional views in zeal for the new as they are often based on truth. The history teacher should keep abreast the latest sound investigation--but, never ahead of it. No special interpretations should tempt one to leave the solid ground of fact. Attacking long exploded historical fallacies should not be done but there should be attack only when there is a false image [misconception] which is a real obstruction to the truth. The history teacher must tear down only where he can reconstruct."[5]

Irene T. Blythe writing on "The Textbooks and the New Discoveries, Emphases, and Viewpoints in American History" in 1932 gives substantial evidence for the conclusion that "the information made available by historical scholars may have little or no influence upon the knowledge available in secondary texts of the same period."[6]

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[4] Earle D. Ross, "The History Teacher as an Image Breaker", South Atlantic Quarterly, 17:330-333 October, 1918. p. 332.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 332-333.

[6] Irene T. Blythe, "The Textbooks and the New Discoveries, Emphases, and Viewpoints in American History," The Historical Outlook, 8:397-401, December, 1932.

Thus, that misconceptions have existed and still do exist is not surprising. Textbook writers were hesitant to incorporate new viewpoints--twelve viewpoints listed by Blythe required from seven to sixteen years before they became incorporated in the secondary texts. Textbooks vary greatly in historical accounts and should only one text be used the chance for growth of misconceptions is great. Students of secondary schools should not waste valuable time in learning erroneous explanations and interpretations--or those that have been questioned by eminent scholars. The purpose of Blythe's investigations was to encourage textbook writers to at least mention new views, emphases, and discoveries made by an acknowledged historian or scholar, though it be contrary to their views.

The fundamental assumptions in leading texts in history and other social studies, geography, music, English, and foreign languages were exposed in a painstaking study by Bessie L. Pierce. Nearly 400 manuals in these fields were analyzed and caused her to conclude:

> "Textbooks are permeated with a national or patriotic spirit................................
> On the other hand, the attitudes engendered toward other peoples through a reading of these books must in many cases, redound to their ignominy in contrast with the glory of America."[7]

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[7] Bessie L. Pierce, Civic Attitudes in American School Textbooks, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1930. p. 254.

Questions were directed to 1,125 seventh to twelfth grade pupils of Pennsylvania and Iowa, in order to discover how far the children's viewpoints resembled those expressed in the textbooks. The great majority thought the highest attribute of patriotism was defense of country. Out of the entire number of students, only four asserted that the United States had carried on some enterprises of which we cannot be proud.

The results of the above investigation reveal national and patriotic misconceptions, for there does not appear in the results of the inquiry any clear recognition that patriotism entails the obligation to criticize, to think independently, and to strive continually for an improvement of conditions.

School Histories at War was perhaps the most worthwhile book found by the writer in compiling a review of related literature and investigations. More than ever before we, of the United States, are living on a world wide basis. More than ever before we, of the United States, should be aware of education in other countries, especially history. We should heed the statement made by Arthur M. Schlesinger in the introduction of the book: "Of all the subjects in the school curriculum, history probably wields the greatest formative influence on national and inter-

national attitudes."[8]

Walworth reveals that much is still to be done to bring about emotional disarmament essential to international understanding. In a lively narrative, he contrasts the manner in which each of our major wars is treated in our own secondary school histories with the texts of the enemy country. The reader will realize when confronted with varying viewpoints that both accounts cannot be right. To one brought up in the United States and who has attended its public schools, distorted emphasis seems to be in the foreign textbook, but still, one wonders whether all of the misrepresentation is on one side. Walworth is content merely to raise the question and makes no attempt to settle the issue.

Schlesinger's introduction to the book states very well the value of it. School Histories at War is a demonstration that what may be only an innocent manifestation of national vanity in one's own text is a source of international peril when indulged in by the school books of other countries.

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[8] Arthur Walworth, School Histories at War, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1938. Introduction p. xv

The book was made even more vital because of the fact that attention was focused on works in general use at the time of writing. Works that had done damage in the past years were omitted.

In the following paragraph, Henry Johnson states the situation forcefully, placing much of the blame for error on elementary school textbooks:

> "There is greater emphasis upon the history of civilization. The selection of facts is more consciously influenced by present tastes, interests, and problems. There is clearer recognition, somewhat reminiscent of the eighteen-thirties, of what history should do for the promotion of intelligent and active citizenship. Greater skill in presentation has raised the general level of textbooks as teaching apparatus. The leading textbooks in history for the senior high school are still the works of competent historical scholars and, in spite of some new concessions to reigning educational theories unfriendly to history, deserve their titles. However, below the senior high school, textbooks published since 1915, excluding a few brilliant exceptions, have lowered the general level of historical scholarship and, in this respect, compare unfavorably even with books published between 1890 and 1900. Of the history that figures in textbook combinations of the social studies by authors without special training in any of the social sciences, not much is to be expected, but some of the errors of fact, misinterpretations, and misapplications with which they promote their pedagogical gospel seem almost inexcusable. It is at best and of necessity a very superficial history. Of textbooks in history for which trained scholars are responsible in whole or in part, more might reasonably be expected. But below the senior high school something in the general educational atmosphere seems at times to make even scholars careless of their facts. Blunders by the score can be gathered from elementary books by reputable historians who would be shocked by palpable blunders in more serious

> historical works. There are, indeed, scholars who seem to regard accuracy as of minor importance in the writing of textbooks. So long as the general picture is fairly correct, errors in small facts are, they say, of no consequence. American textbooks in history for young children have rarely been distinguished for accuracy, but there are specimens published since 1930 which are more offensively inaccurate than similar books published before 1900."[9]

If the elementary textbooks in American history are inferior in accuracy, it is to be expected that misconceptions will easily crop up and be retained by individuals until appropriate action is taken by teachers to focus the student's attention upon the truth.

Each crisis in a nation's history forces a national self-examination and re-evaluation of its past. The English Revolution of the Seventeenth Century, the French and American Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century, the coming of the Machine Age, the upheaval of World War I, the Russian Revolution, World Depression, and World War II all caused a re-study of historical processes and a new plan for the future. Our last crisis proved to be an appropriate time for the appearance of the Report of the Committee on American History in Schools and Colleges of the American Historical Association, the Mississippi Valley Historical

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[9] Henry Johnson, Teaching of History..., New York, MacMillan Company, 1941. pp. 247-8.

Association, and the National Council for the Social Studies, the purpose of which was to restate the fundamental problems in the teaching of American history.

Their report does furnish "a reasonably significant index of popular knowledge of American History." Do Americans know American History? The Committee's answer is:

> "If by knowing history one means the ability to recall dates, names, and specific events, the answer is fairly clear: Americans in general do not know this kind of history. If by knowing history one means the understanding of trends and movements, the appreciation of past events and persons, and the ability to see a connection between the experience of the country and the experience of the individual, the answer is that Americans in general do know a reasonable amount of American history."[10]

(The writer's test in this investigation may appear to have many items that would come under the first category, but the purpose is not recall so much as it is to determine the student's belief.)

The result of the Committee's work after administering a test of understanding in American History consisting of sixty-five multiple choice items has already made valid a misconception item on the writer's test. Seventy percent of a group listed in Who's Who in America believed that Thomas Jefferson helped to frame the Constitution.[11]

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[10] American History in Schools and Colleges, The Report of the Committee on American History in Schools and Colleges, of the A. H. A., M. V. H. A., and the N. C. S. S., New York, MacMillan Company, 1944. p. 1.

[11] Ibid., p. 132.

Since even our well-informed people do not know this important historical fact--that Jefferson was at the time abroad serving as an ambassador to France, destroying any connection with him and the framing of the Constitution--one must conclude that teachers do not give proper emphasis to counteract this belief.

Mervin A. Rowe in 1946 made a related investigation in the social studies. The results of a current happenings test indicated in general "a lack of acquaintance and alertness to the main issues of 1945...."[12] Testing 584 high school seniors he found that the girls had a lower mean than the boys. The mean for college preparatory students was higher than other groups but did not indicate great knowledge of current affairs for prospective leaders. Results indicated that students should get a better coverage of the news. Many students read cheap periodicals of little or no literary value. Students speaking foreign language at home were only eighty-two percent as accurate on the test as those speaking English. The number of social studies courses taken indicated a well rounded social studies program in most high schools. Students receiving high scores did not completely outscore those whose favorite subject

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[12] Mervin Arnold Rowe, "A Study to Determine the Extent to Which High School Seniors Are Familiar With Current Happenings," (unpublished Master's Paper, Boston University, 1946) p. 53.

was in another field. The highest mean was secured by those students who served in the armed forces.

In 1940-41, Roy O. Billet and a group of students at Boston University conducted a survey to determine the reading habits of a group of ninth to twelfth grade students. A questionnaire and a check list dealing with a number of aspects of intelligent reading of newspapers was prepared and administered by members of the class to 1,567 pupils and interpreted with particular reference to ninth grade pupils. Of significance here is the fact that "A few, but only a few, ninth-graders really think they can believe all they read in a newspaper."[13]

Scott and Meyers,[14] in 1923, tested one hundred seventy-three children in grades five, six, seven, and eight on their knowledge of historical terms by means of a completion test which also called for definitions. A sample definition was: "Columbus was an explorer. An explorer is__________." They found that only thirty-eight percent could define "taxation". Only fifty-two percent knew what "colonists" were. In a follow-up test, forty-one percent of all the children could name two explorers but

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[13] Roy O. Billet, "The Unit on the Reading of Newspapers," The English Journal, 31: 15-31, January, 1942. p. 17.

[14] Flora Scott, and Garry C. Meyers, "Children's Empty and Erroneous Concepts of the Common Place," Journal of Educational Research, 8:328, November, 1923.

some were unable to tell what an explorer was. Twenty-nine percent could name a signer of the Declaration of Independence but few could give a reasonably correct idea of the nature of the document.

The above study was concerned only with the correct answers but the report furnishes some basis to the belief that the number of misconceptions in American history may be more numerous than one at first might believe.

Joy M. Lacey[15] investigated, in 1932, the social studies concepts of children in the first three grades and found that children had special difficulty with abstract terms which involved financial and political aspects of history. The more intelligent children were more consistent in forming their concepts. All children did not derive the same meaning from the same material which they read, due to background of experience, mind set and their mental ability. Mere ability to identify an historical term was no indication that a child understood the term. Investigators revealed that children learned casually about many things in their experiences away from school. They deemed it the obligation of the school to aid the children in organizing their experiences for the purpose of making proper constructs.

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[15] Joy M. Lacey, Social Studies Concepts of Children in the First Three Grades, Contributions to Education, No. 548: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1932 pp. 45-72

In a study comparing students who read comic books and those who did not, Florence Heisler[16] concluded that there is no significant difference between the achievement of the comic and non-comic readers. When the achievement means for the non-comic readers was higher, it was found that the mean mental age was also high. According to the results of the study, the reading of comic books seemed to have no effect educationally on the children. Intelligence was ruled out as a factor since there were bright, average, and dull children among those of both the comic and non-comic groups.

The relationship of socio-economic status to personality inventory and achievement test scores was studied by Gough.[17] After examining one hundred twenty-seven sixth-grade public school children, the conclusion was that socio-economic status has a slight positive relationship to academic achievement.

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[16] Florence Heisler, "A Comparison of Comic Book and Non-Comic Book Readers of the Elementary School (and Junior High School)," The Journal of Educational Research, 30: 458-464, February, 1947.

[17] Harrison G. Gough, "The Relationship of Socio-Economic Status to Personality Inventory and Achievement Test Scores," The Journal of Educational Research, 37: 527-540, December, 1946.

CHAPTER II

THE IMPORTANCE AND PLAN OF THE STUDY

Importance of the Study.

> "The chief purpose to be subserved in teaching American history is the inculcation of patriotism.... I want our Children taught that our forefathers were right and t[illegible] were wrong on this subject (Taxation),"[1] was an American patriot's outburst.

In spite of the sincerity and great devotion to America's forefathers for perpetuation of ideas, the viewpoint of Harold Underwood Faulkner explains best how the patriot, whose words are quoted above, erred. Faulkner says, "Have not our children in the public schools a right to the priceless heritage of truth!"[2]

Our children do have the right to the priceless heritage of truth. Truth is synonymous with fact, except as pointed out by the Committee on Historiography.

> "It is sometimes suggested that particular facts may be established as objectively true by scientific methods but that general facts or hypotheses or theories which relate particular facts cannot be established as objective truths. Yet every assertion of a particular fact, established by scientific method presupposes the objective truth of facts greater generality, and intelligent denial of assertions purporting to state objective truths in history must be based on other facts, particular or general, believed to be objectively true.

---

[1] Harold Underwood Faulkner, "Perverted American History," Harpers, 152:337-346, February, 1926, p. 343.

[2] Ibid., p. 343.

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[1] Harold Underwood Faulkner, "Perverted American History," Harpers, 152:337-346, February, 1926. p. 343.

[2] Ibid., p. 343.

> Charles Pierce suggests that evidence warranting the assertion of a fact should be considered not as a single chain of casually related elements, which would be no stronger than its weakest link, but as a cable of relatively independent causal strands whose strength, as evidence, is greater than the sum of the strands taken singly."[3]

Misconceptions, so to speak, are false facts. Where these misconceptions exist there is always a reason. Common sense and logic tell us that we must explore the students' minds to find the prevailing misconceptions which as facts for important generalizations in our nation's history are giving a distorted perspective--a view so disillusionary that once the light of truth does come, one is left in a complex and dejected state of mind.

Some educators may believe that truth should not be given and give a reasonable answer to justify this belief. For example, there are those who insist that truth in drawing the portraits of our national heroes would destroy the best examples for character building. The writer's reply to such a statement would be similar to that of Elizabeth Ring in The Historical Outlook.

> "The facts have been disregarded in order that the portrait of him [Lincoln] might be drawn which America wanted....Yet how much more interesting

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[3] Charles A. Beard, and others, Theory and Practice in Historical Study: A Report of the Committee on Historiography, Social Science Research Council, New York, Bulletin 54, 1946. p. 124.

> Lincoln will be to students when his human faults become known to them; how much more valuable to themselves will their own revelation of Lincoln be after they have studied the portraiture of Lincoln as revealed by his many biographers."[4]

The writer believes this study justified if only a few misconceptions are verified and labeled to serve as a small beginning toward a goal which can be reached only through meticulous observations, studies and reports, so that analyses may be obtained by teachers for constructive uses. This study might serve as an aid for teachers of American history in that it may show them where they err in the impressions that they give or neglect to give, whichever the case may be. This study and others like it would economize the American history teachers' time by giving a concrete idea of items that are definitely misconceptions and those which are not. It may save time by pointing out misconceptions being taught which are a waste of time to teach. Being a democratic nation our body politic must be taught historical truth and not exploded fallacies and misconceptions. At the same time we must recognize that the truth of history is not absolute and unchangeable: truth is the most recent and authentic result of historical research.

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4 Elizabeth Ring, "What Shall We Teach About Lincoln?" The Historical Outlook, 23:30-82, February, 1932.

With the coming of the atom bomb and other great technical developments, our nation plays the leading role in world affairs. Domestic and foreign problems, increasingly complex, are arrayed before the citizens of the United States to handle. But, on controversial issues few are able to speak objectively, making our role in world affairs less promising. Historical truth would remove a passionately minded public in favor of a rational and logical citizenry.

R. R. Fahrney has written an article dealing with the teaching of truth about history in which he favors the teaching of truth and at the same time recognizes the obstacles in doing so. He touches upon the reason why truth might be avoided.

> "One wonders what effect it might have upon the presidential elections if every eligible voter knew enough of the truth about history to appreciate the irony in the Republicans' quadrennial appeal to the memory of Abraham Lincoln and the Democrats' equally illogical claim to the party of Thomas Jefferson?"[5]

Of the Civil War he says, "Truth would remove the last vestiges of that sectional bitterness between the North and the South which has for decades militated against national unity."[6]

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[5] R. R. Fahrney, "Teaching the Truth about History," Social Education 1:98-104, February, 1937. p. 99.

[6] Ibid. p. 99

One has only to look through a card catalogue to see that there are many books on the Civil War, each attempting to give the truth and end misconceptions regarding the causes and results of the war.

Can we deny Fahrney the plausibility of the following statements made by him?

> "A solution for the war problem probably lies in courageous presentation of the truth of history. Recent studies have demonstrated that wars are born and reared in propaganda which undermines any intelligent effort to weather international crises."[7]

The sinking of the Maine was used for propaganda for war activity without definite proof that the vessel was sunk by the Spanish. Even today an item of the test in this study, "The destruction of the Maine was proven to be the work of the enemy Spain," was thought to be true by thirty-nine percent of all the high school seniors examined.

Despite research there is much to be done to discover the popular misconceptions. Even then, there is further the task of removing the obstacles that prevent the presentation of historical truths in order to rid the people of the popular misconceptions in American history.

American history is taught several times in our public schools, a common combination being the fifth, seventh, and twelfth grades as indicated by students on a

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[7] Op. cit. p. 99

questionnaire sheet attached to the test which was given in this study. According to the Committee on American History in Schools and Colleges this is a satisfactory trend, for

> "The Committee believes and has confirmed by the results of its test that Americans must be repeatedly exposed to their own history in school, in college, and in adult life if they are to know and use it."[8]

The writer believes that should American history be taught fewer times and more efficiently, the results would be better, for it is the common idea of a school board that it is all right to shove onto any teacher American history as a left-over subject. The Committee stated a blunt truth when it said "the education of the teacher must be improved."[9] Famous and important as the Constitution of the United States is, of the American history teachers interviewed by the writer during this study there were several who thought the item from the test previously cited in this study--Thomas Jefferson helped to frame the Constitution--to be true. If the teaching force were improved, one obstacle toward ending misconceptions would be removed, for we do need well-informed and up-to-date teachers of American history who are also well acquainted with both past and recent historical research.

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[8] American History in Schools and Colleges, p. 13.

[9] Loc. cit.

American history textbooks do not always embody the contributions of modern scholarship. That they perpetuate exploded fallacies is a proven fact. Irene Blythe's study of modern texts, in 1932, revealed that the misconception uncovered by Albert Lybyer in 1914--The Capture of Constantinople in 1453 was a principal cause of the discovery of America because the capture of Constantinople had not caused the exploration for new routes to India.--was perpetuated by most of the textbooks used in her study. Of the fifteen texts examined, six made no definite statements but implied the false view by statements on interference of the Turks with trade; five gave the traditional false view, and two omitted all discussion of the discovery of America. The present writer did not make a study of textbooks for misconceptions though such a project would be very worthwhile.

In some instances, hostile public opinion prevents the minimizing of popular misconceptions in American history. Fahrney cites two examples, one of them being the attempt of a patriotic organization to dismiss Professor Claude Van Tyne of the faculty of the University of Michigan who had devoted a lifetime of research to the American Revolution, incurring the wrath of supersensitive patriots by applying the term "loyalists" to Torys, breaking the interpretation

of the Revolution as a righteous uprising against a brutal tyrant of oppression. The other example is a Wisconsin state law passed in 1923 which reads:

> "No history or other textbook shall be adopted for use or be used in any district school which falsifies the facts regarding the War of Independence, or the War of 1812 or which defames our nation's founders or misrepresents the ideals and causes for which they struggled and sacrificed, or which contains propaganda favorable to any foreign government."[10]

On the surface this law seems favorable for the teaching of facts but in truth it was meant to perpetuate traditional views.

We have seen that there are obstacles preventing the teaching of accurate history but of the test items which make up the core of this study none can be said to be greatly objectionable. All statements of the test were validated by scholars of American history. A teacher should know whether and how far he can go in ridding students' minds of misconceptions. Teachers are forced to be realistic in serving the dictates of their three masters: the government, the taxpayers, and the parents. Oftentimes the locality is the essential determiner of whether truth shall be taught in its schools.

One other thing, educators of today do not encourage rote memorization of specific facts. Upon looking at some of the test items many will be found to invoke "facts."

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[10] Fahrney, op. cit. p. 100.

The writer takes the same stand on this matter as does the Committee on American History.

> "The importance of facts cannot be denied--they are frequently indispensable--but they are the means toward the larger objectives of history and not the ends in themselves. They must be utilized and in many instances learned, but the retention of facts is not the exponent of historical power."[11]

This study is a start toward exploration in American history to determine the extent to which misconceptions exist and the relation of the existence of misconceptions to other factors. The writer hopes that as a result of this study others will be encouraged to continue research along similar lines, for the problem to be completely covered is properly the work of many minds cooperating for a common goal. Experienced teachers of American history throughout the country will know of many specific misconception items which when accumulated into one volume would become a teacher's handbook containing misconceptions applicable to all types of social situations and environmental factors.

Plan of the Study:

Sources of Information.

The investigator had to make certain that the misconception items going into the misconception test contained

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[11] American History in Schools and Colleges, p. 3.

items about which misapprehensions and misunderstandings already exist. Sources had to be reliable, otherwise items which students might answer incorrectly because of a lack of knowledge would accumulate. The following sources proved instrumental in obtaining the list of misconceptions:

1. Professors of history in colleges.
2. Teachers of history in high schools.
3. Colleagues in a social studies seminar.
4. Adviser for the writing of this paper.
5. Magazines and periodicals.
6. Textbooks in American history.
7. Books about American history written by emminent historians.
8. Class notes.

All of the people mentioned above--professors, teachers, colleagues and adviser--were invaluable as sources for many of the misconceptions held about American history. The books gave helpful negative word clues, such as, "It was not Daniel Webster." Class notes proved helpful, whereby misconceptions held by the writer were revealed. Magazine articles contained fine source material. Perhaps the best magazine for this purpose was The Historical Outlook and The Social Studies, which contains frequent articles entitled "Revised Historical Viewpoints." The previously mentioned study by Irene Blythe was published in

The Historical Outlook.

To determine to what degree the misconceptions existed, it was thought best to construct a true-false test, for as Greene, Jorgensen, and Gerberich point out,

> "True-false items can be used satisfactorily in many situations if they are constructed carefully enough to make them largely free from ambiguity. They can be used in testing popular misconceptions and unfounded beliefs in the science and social studies areas. They are also useful for situations in which the absence of enough plausible alternative responses make the use of a multiple-choice item impracticable."[12]

Because a true-false test was constructed, true items had to be used along with misconception items. Of over a hundred items gathered which were thought to be misconceptions, only fifty were used. The completed test consisted of one hundred items, this being considered a reasonable number for students to finish in the average forty minute class period at the different high schools. The test in many instances was finished in only twenty minutes by students.

The general suggestions made by Greene, Jorgensen, and Gerberich were followed as closely as possible in constructing the test:

1. Double negatives should be avoided.

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[12] Harry A. Greene, Albert N. Jorgensen, J. Raymond Gerberich, Measurement and Evaluation in the Secondary School, New York, Longmans, Green, 1944. p. 175.

2. Statements which are part true and part false should be avoided.
3. "Specific determiners" should be used sparingly and carefully.
4. Answers should be required in a highly objective form.
5. Approximately an equal number of true and false statements should be used.
6. Random occurrence of true and false statements should be employed (in this case a coin was tossed).[13]

The misconception test items in final form were approved, in general, by professors of American history in two universities. It was recognized by them in each case that some items were trivial, and that other items were highly significant. Each historian considered the study very worthwhile.

The Questionnaire

A questionnaire was constructed in order to secure information pertinent to the analysis of the test results. It was thought that some groups might hold in mind more popular misconceptions than others. Therefore, the senior class was subdivided into groups according to: age, sex, the number of times they had had an American history course, parent's occupation (the mother's occupation was used when

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[13] Greene, op. cit., p. 192.

a student failed to indicate the father's occupation), the number of history books read during the school year, the number of historical comic books read during the school year, and the number of historical movies seen during the school year.

The Selection of the Groups to be Tested.

Since the writer was particularly interested in twelfth grade students, that grade was chosen as the one in which to carry on this study. The twelfth grade is the time when most of the seniors end their formal education. Logically, this class would be the one to serve as the best indicator as to the prevalence of misconceptions, even though at the time the test was given, nine of the eleven high schools tested were giving the seniors a course in American history.

A good geographic distribution was considered important, and rural as well as urban areas were included in the testing program. The following states are represented: Massachusetts (four schools), New Hampshire (five schools), Vermont (two schools).

The test was given in eleven high schools to a total of 412 seniors, of which 194 were boys and 218 were girls.

Treatment of Data

The Pearson Product-Moment Method[14] was employed to find the relationship between the number of misconceptions and each of the following: age, number of times the student had had an American history course, last mark the student received in a history course, and the IQ. Below are the formulas used from Guilford's book on statistics:[15]

1. Formula for x

$$c = \frac{fx}{N}$$

$$x = \sqrt{\frac{fx2}{N} - (C'x)^2}$$

2. Formula for r.[16]

$$r = rxy \ \frac{\frac{x'y'}{N} - (c'_x \; c'_y)}{('x) \quad ('y)}$$

3. Formula for standard error.[17]

$$r = \frac{1 - r^2}{\sqrt{N-1}}$$

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[14] J. P. Guilford, Fundamental Statistics in Psychology and Education, New York, Mcgraw-Hill, 1942. pp. 206-209.

[15] Ibid. p. 207.

[16] Ibid. p. 206.

[17] Ibid. p. 209.

All other data obtained from the questionnaire and the test were treated differently. The materials presented include:

1. A table of the misconception items arranged in the order of the number of misconceptions held.
2. A series of descriptive paragraphs in which each item is substantiated and commented upon. Arrangement is in the same order as in the previous table.
3. A table showing the total right, the total wrong (misconceptions), and the percent wrong on each item for 412 seniors.
4. A table showing the total right, the total wrong, and the percent wrong on each item for 218 senior girls.
5. A table showing the total right, the total wrong, and the percent wrong on each item for 194 senior boys.
6. A table showing whether the boys or the girls had a greater percentage of misconceptions on each item.
7. A table showing the relationship of the parent's occupation to the number of misconceptions held.
8. A table showing the relationship of the number of books dealing with history read during the school year to the number of misconceptions held.
9. A table showing the relationship of the number of comic books read during the school year to the number of misconceptions held.
10. A table showing the relationship of the number of historical movies seen during the school year to the number of misconceptions held.

As will be noted, intelligence test scores were not available for all of the seniors in the investigation.

No attempt was made to equate the intelligence test scores, although in each of the eleven high schools different intelligence tests were used.

CHAPTER III

CHAPTER III

THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The results of the misconception test given to 412 high school seniors are tabulated and interpreted largely on a negative basis, that is, the number of items missed (or the number of misconceptions) in each case became the score for each individual. Since scores representing the number of misconceptions held were used, in computing the coefficients of correlation, negative correlations would seem to be probable.

The range in score for the 412 seniors on the fifty items of the test was from twelve to forty-three, with a mean score of 29.4. A graphic picture of the scores obtained is shown in Figure 1. It is evident that the scores are not very far from a normal distribution. There is a slight variance in that there are four scores to the left of and furthermost from the mean. The scores spreading to the left of the mean are those of students who have the least number of misconceptions, and the scores to the right are those of students who hold a greater number of misconceptions.

FIGURE I

DISTRIBUTION OF SCORES OF 412 SENIORS
ON THE MISCONCEPTION TEST

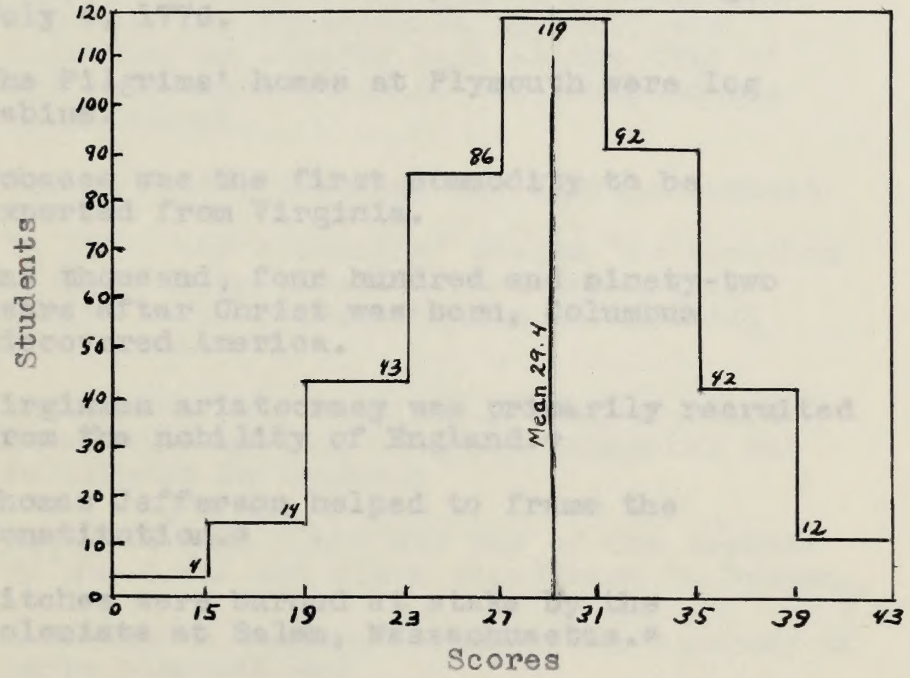

Table I shows the items arranged in the order of the percent who held misconceptions. The first thirteen items are considered by the writer to be definite misconceptions since over seventy-five percent of the seniors believed them to be true.

TABLE I

TEST ITEMS ARRANGED IN THE ORDER OF THE PERCENT OF THE SENIORS HOLDING MISCONCEPTIONS

		% Wrong
1.	The Declaration of Independence was signed July 4, 1776.	89.56
2.	The Pilgrims' homes at Plymouth were log cabins.	86.41
3.	Tobacco was the first commodity to be exported from Virginia.	85.92
4.	One thousand, four hundred and ninety-two years after Christ was born, Columbus discovered America.	84.71
5.	Virginian aristocracy was primarily recruited from the nobility of England.*	83.01
6.	Thomas Jefferson helped to frame the Constitution.*	82.52
7.	Witches were burned at stake by the colonists at Salem, Massachusetts.*	81.80
8.	The first Negroes in Virginia in 1619 were slaves.	80.58
9.	The qualifications in the 15th amendment "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous servitude...." guaranteed the negroes the same voting power as the white people.	80.10
10.	The United States won the War of 1812.*	78.64

TABLE I (continued)

TEST ITEMS ARRANGED IN THE ORDER OF THE PER CENT OF THE SENIORS HOLDING MISCONCEPTIONS

		% Wrong
11.	"Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" was inscribed on Liberty Bell at the time of and in commemoration of our independence from England.	77.43
12.	Robert Fulton invented the first steamboat.	76.46
13.	In 1774, the colonists' slogan "No taxation without representation" expressed their desire to be represented in the English Parliament.*	75.24
14.	The decade following the Lewis and Clark Expedition was one of rapid expansion and settlement in Oregon.*	73.79
15.	George Rogers Clark was one of the leaders of the Lewis and Clark expedition to Oregon.	73.54
16.	Seventeenth century Virginia was a colony of large plantations.	73.06
17.	Patrick Henry the devout patriot of "Give me liberty, or give me death" promoted the acceptance of the Constitution as a liberty-making document.	71.60
18.	The Stamp Act (1765) required the use of stamps like our postage stamps on the legal documents.	70.87
19.	The majority of the colonists exhibited a desire for independence by April 19, 1775.*	69.66
20.	As a boy, George Washington celebrated his birthday on February 22.	64.56
21.	It is a well established fact that Pocahontas saved Captain John Smith's life.	63.59

TABLE I (continued)

TEST ITEMS ARRANGED IN THE ORDER OF THE PERCENT OF THE SENIORS HOLDING MISCONCEPTIONS

		% Wrong
22.	The four freedoms (freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from fear, freedom from want) are stated and guaranteed in the first of the ten amendments to the Constitution.*	63.11
23.	The Ku Klux Klan was originated for the purpose of controlling the Negro population.	61.89
24.	"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" is a part of our written constitution.*	58.50
25.	Paul Revere gained nation wide fame before 1872.	57.04
26.	George Washington cut down his father's cherry tree with a hatchet.*	57.03
27.	Bunker Hill Monument commemorated a victorious battle of the colonists over the British.*	56.80
28.	Lincoln was a firm abolitionist.	54.61
29.	Upon arriving at America, the Puritans made a complete break with the Church of England.	54.13
30.	Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first President that the majority of the people wanted for the third term.	53.40
31.	Hostilities between the United States and the Barbary Pirates ended in 1805.*	52.43
32.	The Boston Tea Party was a spontaneous riot.	51.21

TABLE I (continued)

TEST ITEMS ARRANGED IN THE ORDER OF THE PERCENT OF THE SENIORS HOLDING MISCONCEPTIONS

		% Wrong
33.	Braddock's defeat was due to the fact that his soldiers became panic stricken.	50.49
34.	Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed all of the slaves in the United States.	49.76
35.	The crime rate in the United States is highest among the foreign born.	49.27
36.	The Constitution provides for the President's Cabinet.	48.79
37.	Massachusetts Bay Colony was known for its religious toleration.*	47.82
38.	The Monroe Doctrine was eagerly accepted by the South American Republics upon its announcement.*	44.17
39.	At the end of the Colonial Period the colonies were racially homogeneous and so prepared for revolt against Great Britain.	43.45
40.	Boston was settled by the Pilgrims.*	41.75
41.	The capture of Constantinople was one cause for the discovery of America.*	39.81
42.	The New England Colonies were politically democratic.	39.56
43.	The destruction of the Maine was proven to be the work of the enemy, Spain.*	39.32
44.	The United States declared war on the Axis powers in the same document which declared war against Japan in 1941.*	37.62

TABLE I (continued)

TEST ITEMS ARRANGED IN THE ORDER OF THE PERCENT OF THE SENIORS HOLDING MISCONCEPTIONS

		% Wrong
45.	The desire to obtain spices for food preservation outweighed other motives of the great explorers.	36.89
46.	The first Continental Congress met in New York.	35.68
47.	The people of the United States vote directly for the President.*	28.16
48.	Thanksgiving Day became a national holiday the same year our Constitution was adopted.	20.15
49.	The Thirteenth Amendment which freed the slaves gave the Negroes the same voting privileges as the white people.*	19.42
50.	Daniel Webster wrote the popular Webster's Dictionary.	18.93

*Items considered by the writer to be important.

Comments on the Misconception Items.

Why are some of the test items so misconceived? What are the significant facts connected with each item? The writer will attempt to explain the answer to these questions where explanation seems necessary or of interest or value to the reader.

1. The Declaration of Independence was thought by ninety percent of the seniors to have been signed on July 4, 1776. The greatest contributor to this misconception may be the famous painting, "The Signing of the Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776." The actual truth about the signing of the Declaration of Independence is brought out by an article in the Encyclopedia Britannica.

> "Though the Declaration reads as 'In Congress, July 4, 1776, the unanimous Declaration of the thirteen United States of America,' New York's adhesion was in fact not voted until the 9th, nor announced to congress until the 15th--the Declaration being unanimous, however, when it was ordered, on the 19th, to be engrossed and signed under the above title. As read before the army meanwhile, it was headed 'In Congress, July 4, 1776. A Declaration by the representatives of the United States of America in General Congress assembled.' Contrary to the inference naturally to be drawn from the form of the document no signatures were attached on the 4th."[1]

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[1] Francis S. Philbrick, "Declaration of Independence," Encyclopedia Britannica, Thirteenth edition, VII, p. 125.

The importance attached to this item as a misconception is not great, but it shows that many people err if they celebrate the fourth of July thinking that the unanimous Declaration was signed on that day. It was not unanimous nor was it signed on July fourth.

2. Eighty-six percent of the seniors thought that the Pilgrims' homes at Plymouth were log cabins. This widespread belief is caused by poets, orators, and historians including James Truslow Adams and Charles M. Andrews whose imaginations conceived the early settlers as living in log cabins. The Pageant of America sponsored by Yale has a typical illustration showing an all log village of Plymouth. The Hotel Myles Standish at Boston has a similar mural adorning its walls.

> "Yet a book," writes Dixon Wecter, "published in 1939 by the late Harold R. Shirtleff, former head of the research department at Williamsburg, proves that the log cabin was brought to America late in the Seventeenth Century by the Swedes and by the Germans from the Black Forest--who had long lived in huts built of logs, a type of construction unknown to England then as now."[2]

Of the eight mural paintings by Charles Hoffbauer at the New England Mutual building in Boston, one shows the true type of Pilgrims' homes, having the palisade walls known to them before they embarked from England's shores.

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[2] Dixon Wecter, The Hero in America, New York, Scribners, 1941, p. 35.

3. Eighty-six percent of the seniors thought that tobacco was the first commodity to be exported from Virginia. Actually the first commodity to be exported from Virginia was lumber, as stressed by Beard. "Lumber and its by-products became commodities of export from Virginia before settlers in that colony learned to produce, cure, and pack tobacco."[3]

4. Eighty-five percent of the seniors thought the birth of Christ to be 0 or 1 B. C. as indicated by the answer to the item stating that Columbus discovered America one thousand, four hundred and ninety-two years after Christ was born. The importance of knowing when Christ lived is pointed out by Johnson.

> "To some pupils, even in the high school, it may seem rather odd that Christ should have been born before the beginning of the Christian era, and this may lead to the discovery that Christians for some centuries lived and died without any Christian chronology."[4]

5. Eighty-three percent of the seniors thought that Virginian aristocracy was primarily recruited from the nobility of England. Faulkner gives a different story:

> "As a matter of fact, the Virginian aristocrat developed almost entirely within the colony, and

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[3] Charles A. Beard and Mary R. Beard, A Basic History of the United States, New York, New Home Library, 1944, p. 37.

[4] Johnson, op. cit., p. 219.

> the large part of it was derived from the English merchant class. The great Cavalier exodus stressed by Fiske and other historians never took place; Wertenbaker the most accurate of recent Virginian investigators, has been able to find but a handful of the gentry who originated from the Cavaliers. 'Few men of rank,' says the sociologist, Arthur W. Calhoun, 'ever came to the wilderness of Virginia' and the planters were generally of bourgeois stock. Even the Cavaliers were not necessarily of noble blood. The leading families of Virginia had exactly the same origin as those of New England. The Virginia middle class sprang from the families of immigrants of humble means and origin, which migration began early and continued through the seventeenth century."5

6. No reference is needed to substantiate the sixth most popular misconception, for those who know their history well--Thomas Jefferson did not help to frame the Constitution. Eighty-three percent of the seniors thought he did. At the time of the framing of the Constitution, Jefferson was in France serving as a foreign minister. Too often, teachers of American history neglect to tell their pupils about the important men of the day with influential ideas who did not help to frame the Constitution. John Adams was another important figure, who, at the time of the framing of the Constitution, was serving as a foreign minister in England.

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5 Harold Underwood Faulkner, "Colonial History Debunked," Harpers, 152:84-88, December, 1925, p. 85.

7. The old story that witches were burned at the stake by the colonists at Salem, Massachusetts, was believed by eighty-two percent of the seniors. The truth is as follows:

> "The Governor appointed a special court composed of worthy magistrates, some of them college graduates, and presided over by William Stoughton, who had also been a fellow of New College, Oxford. This panel of learned magistrates became infected with the panic; they declined to follow the best rules for detecting witches laid down by professional English witch-hunters and urges on them, collectively and individually, by the ministers. Before they adjourned in September, 1692, nineteen persons and two dogs had been hanged for witches, and one, the brave Giles Corey, was pressed to death according to English common law, for refusing to plead guilty or not guilty in order to save his property for his family."[6]

8. Eighty-one percent of the seniors believed the first Negroes were slaves, which is not surprising, for it is a common occurrence to hear the statement that the first Negro slaves were brought to America in 1619, and it is just as common to read it in a text.

> "These first Negroes in Virginia were not slaves but indentured servants and after they had worked out their time they became free; some of them became landowners. During the early history of Virginia, the number of Negroes in Virginia increased slowly; in 1649 there were only three hundred, and in 1671 they numbered two thousand. The first formal recognition of Negro slavery, as distinguished from indentured labor, came in 1656, and slavery was regularly provided for by law in 1661."[7]

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[6] Samuel Eliot Morison, The Puritan Pronaos, New York, New York University Press, 1936. pp. 252-253.

[7] Ralph Volney Harlow, The Growth of the United States, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1943. p. 26.

9. Eighty percent of the seniors thought the fifteenth amendment guaranteed the Negroes the same voting power as the white people. Race, color, and previous servitude are the only specifications which limit the action the United States or any state may take to prevent Negroes from voting. This does not guarantee the Negro the right to vote, even so, for control of the Negro vote by the states is possible by making provisions not affecting the whites, so much as the Negroes, at the same time staying within the bounds of the fifteenth amendment. Early methods of controlling the Negro vote are given by Ogg and Ray:

> "Negroes, however, were commonly illiterate, and also poor; and this opened a way out of the dilemma. In 1890, Mississippi set the pace for her sister states by writing into her constitution clauses under which, in order to vote, one not only must have lived two years in the state and one year in the election district, but must have paid all taxes assessed against him (including a poll tax of two dollars), and must be able either to read any section of the state constitution or to understand it when read to him and to give a reasonable interpretation of it. The results were, in general, those desired. The exceptionally lengthy period of residence barred large numbers of Negroes who habitually shifted from plantation to plantation. Even if a colored man succeeded in paying his poll tax on time (and it was artfully required to be paid a year in advance of election), he was likely to be careless enough to be unable to produce his tax receipt when called for. Few Mississippi Negroes could read, and still fewer could give an interpretation of a perhaps craftily selected passage from the state constitution likely to be accepted as 'reasonable' by a white official with a strong predisposition against Negro voting. .... Although every one knew that the primary purpose of the regulations was to keep the Negro from the polls, not a word

> was said in them about 'race, color, or previous condition'; and when the federal Supreme Court passed upon them in a test case, it was unable to find that they in any manner violated the Fifteenth Amendment. Clauses of similar purport accordingly found their way into the constitutions of most other Southern states."[8]

Further on in another paragraph, they state:

> "...as they stand today, in some states hardly one Negro in a hundred ever casts a ballot, and perhaps not more than ten percent of the adult black population of the entire South is on the registration lists."[9]

10. The United States had a few victorious isolated battles during the War of 1812, but that does not mean we won the war. The effects would have been bad, too, had we lost it. The actual result of the war was a cessation of hostilities as provided in the Treaty of Ghent. Over seventy-eight percent of the seniors thought that the United States won the War of 1812.

11. More than three-fourths of the seniors thought that the inscription, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all inhabitants thereof," on Liberty Bell commemorated our independence from England. The truth is that Liberty Bell was cast in England and was ordered by the Pennsylvania Provincial Assembly in 1751 for the New State

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[8] Frederick A. Ogg and P. Orman Ray, Introduction to American Government, New York, Appleton-Century, 1945. p. 167-168

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 168.

House, and a committee of that body selected as an inscription for it words from Leviticus xxv, 10. The Bell was delivered in Philadelphia in 1752 and hung in the State House on June 7, 1753.[10]

12. Over seventy-five percent of the seniors thought that Robert Fulton invented the first steamboat, but as Harlow points out about the steamboats, the first successful boats were the products of several different inventors. James Rumsey should receive much credit for his new type boiler which increased the efficiency of the steam engine, taking the steamboat out of the experimental class.

> "Prior to the launching of Robert Fulton's Clermont, at least sixteen steamboats had been built in the United States, and fifteen of these were regularly operated.........................
> ....
> By the time he was ready to build there was a considerable body of accumulated experience, and Fulton took advantage of it."[11]

13. The colonists' slogan in 1774 of "No taxation without representation," while a popular slogan of great power did not actually mean that the colonists desired or expected to send members to a Parliament that was not even a representative body of England as a whole.[12]

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[10] Henry Woods, American Sayings, New York, Essential Books, 1945. p. 51.

[11] Harlow, op. cit., p. 332.

[12] Samuel Eagle Forman, Our Republic (Revised by Freemont P. Wirth), New York, Appleton-Century, 1944. pp. 57-58.

To convince the students that this is true, one has only to discuss the subject "rotten boroughs." That seniors do need this conviction is seen from the fact that seventy-five percent of those tested thought that the slogan expressed the colonists' desire to be represented in the English Parliament in 1774.

14. About seventy-four percent of the seniors thought that the decade following the Lewis and Clark Expedition was one of rapid expansion and settlement in Oregon. That this misconception exists may be the fault of the texts. A popular text says little about the expansion westward in connection with the Lewis and Clark exploration, except to state that it "constituted our best claim to the great region of the Northwest known as Oregon."[13]

Another well known high school text makes the concept clear in a paragraph which follows that of the Lewis and Clark expedition. "In the 1830's a few American frontiersmen began to trickle in, and a considerable interest was aroused in the Oregon region."[13½] The high school students having the smallest percentage of misconceptions on this item were those using texts other than the one first cited. Six of the eleven schools examined used only that text.

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[13] David Saville Muzzey, A History of Our Country, Boston, Ginn and Company, 1945. p. 225.

[13½] Harold Underwood Faulkner and Tyler Kepner, America Its History and People, N. Y., Harper, 1947. pp. 395-396.

15. Seventy-four percent of the seniors thought George Rogers Clark was one of the leaders of the Lewis and Clark expedition. George Rogers Clark was an elder brother to William Clark. It was William who with Meriwether Lewis made the expedition to Oregon.

16. Nearly seventy-five percent of the seniors thought that seventeenth century Virginia was a colony of large plantations. Harlow gives a description contrary to this belief.

> "In the main, Virginia was a community of small farmers, the great majority of whom--some ninety percent--not only owned but cultivated their land. Before 1705 at least the average farm or plantation was about 370 acres in extent. Large estates were rare."[14]

17. Patrick Henry did not accept the Constitution as a liberty making document, as seventy-two percent of the seniors thought. As a matter of fact he opposed its adoption, saying of it, "This government subjects everything to the Northern majority. We thus put unbounded power over our property into hands not having a common interest."[15]

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[14] Harlow, op. cit., p. 27.

[15] Henry W. Lawrence, "The Misused Washington," The Historical Outlook, 8:267-269, October, 1932. p. 268.

18. The Stamp Act did not require stamps like our postage stamps on legal documents, which seventy-one percent of the seniors believed. On legal documents, the stamps were printed in embossed letters directly on coarse blue paper.

> "The Stamp Act required that every broadside, newspaper, or pamphlet; every bill note or bond; every lease, license, insurance policy, ships clearance paper, or college diploma; every instrument used in the conveyance of real or personal property; and all legal documents of every kind should be written or printed on stamped vellum or paper, to be sold by public officials appointed for the purpose."[16]

An elementary textbook promotes this misconception by stating:

> "The law required the colonists to buy stamps from officers of the government and to put them on legal papers and on various articles bought and sold, just as we have to put stamps on letters."[17]

19. Seventy percent of the seniors thought that the majority of the colonists exhibited a desire for independence by April 19, 1775. We must not remember the American Revolution as a spontaneous and unified uprising of the colonists against the British oppressors; Claude H. Van Tyne

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[16] George Elliott Howard, "Preliminaries of the Revolution 1763-1775," The American Nation, New York, Harpers, 1905, VIII, p. 137.

[17] Eugene C. Barker, M. R. Grimm, and Matilda Hughes, The Story of Colonial Times, New York, Row, Peterson, 1937. p. 364.

emphasizes:

> "...the importance in the American Revolution of the Loyalists (probably at least a third of the population) who opposed the separation from the British Empire and who were persecuted and exiled on account of their stand."[18]

There were others to whom it did not matter much either way, whether the colonists achieved independence or remained unified with England.

20. Sixty-five percent of the seniors believed that George Washington as a boy celebrated his birthday on February twenty-second. This statement is not true.

> "The Scots who from time immemorial commenced the year on the 25th of March, adopted the Gregorian style in 1599, but the English, with wonderful pertinacity, held out against these wise regulations during more than 150 years; during which time all their historians retained the old style in their dates. In 1751, the English Parliament enacted that the year should commence on the 1st of January, and that the 3rd of September of that year should be called the 14th, thereby striking out eleven days, which the English calendar then required to reduce it to Gregorian.
>
> As most of our colonial history is embraced between the time of the Gregorian reformation in 1582, and its adoption by the English Parliament in 1751, and as our historians have taken their materials partly from Catholic, and partly from Protestant writers, as might be expected, a great confusion of dates has arisen, and we frequently find on the same page (even in our best histories), part of the date in the old style, and part in the

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[18] Blythe, op. cit., p. 396.

> new. More particularly is this the case in regard to the dates in the days of the month, for in most cases recent historians have made the changes with respect to date of the year."[19]

The above excerpt is evidence which sets back Washington's birthday to February eleven. The important point here is not so much Washington's birthday as it is an understanding of the change in calendars from Julian to Gregorian. For American history students this matter assumes great importance when the different sources are studied in which old style dates are used.

21. Pocahontas may have saved Captain John Smith's life, but is is not a well substantiated fact, even though about sixty-four percent of the seniors thought so. The importance of this item is minor. We should distinguish fact from fiction, or at least question the facts given by those who are known to sometimes enlarge upon the truth. Smith's biography contains the Pocahontas story; that we should accept it as being true is questioned by inference even in a recent high school text which calls Smith "that famous story teller."[20]

22. That sixty-three percent of the seniors thought the four freedoms are stated and guaranteed in the first of the ten amendments to the Constitution may seem difficult to believe, for the use of the term and the naming of the four

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[19] Willson, op. cit. p. 5.

[20] Faulkner and Kepner, op. cit., p. 18.

freedoms are of recent origin. The first two are in the first ten amendments.

> "In his annual message of January 6, 1941 to the Congress in which President Roosevelt asked for the passage of the Lend Lease measure, he named the four freedoms to which the world must aspire. 'In the future days, which we seek to make secure,' the message read, 'we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.' These he declared were: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from fear, freedom from want."[21]

23. Textbooks usually do not explain about the origin of the Ku Klux Klan, yet no more than sixty-two percent believed that it originated for the purpose of controlling the Negro population. The story of how it originated is as follows:

> "In May, 1866, a group of young men gathered in a law office of Pulaski, Tennessee, a small but cultured town near the Alabama line, and finding time hanging heavy on their hands, decided to organize a club. They enthusiastically received... the name Ku Klux (a barbarization of Kuklos the Greek word for circle)."[22]

and to carry out the alliteration, Klan was added.

24. Fifty-eight percent of the seniors believed that the words "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these

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[21] Henry Woods, American Sayings, New York, Essential Books, 1945. p. 121.

[22] John Moffatt Mecklin, The Ku Klux Klan, New York, Harcourt, Brace, 1924. p. 62.

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are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." are part of the written Constitution. This item was considered by one historian to be the best item on the test. Actually, the quotation is in the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence. Should not we be more familiar with our two most important documents enough to recognize from which a quotation is from?

25. Although fifty-seven percent thought that Paul Revere was famous before 1872, Wecter gives reason to believe differently:

> "Paul Revere's exploit...has received all the poetic tribute--despite the fact that he was a man of forty mounted on a stout workhorse, and that this night's work was but one of his many valuable services as a Revolutionary courier, before he fell into disgrace and was charged unfairly with cowardice. (Account in Dictionary of American Biography; a court-martial in 1782 eventually restored him to official favor.) His later and nationwide fame he owes solely to Longfellow. Prior to Longfellow's poem Revere's name was not included in a single dictionary of American Biography....Revere's name appeared for the first time in a biographical reference book in 1872, Francis S. Drake's Dictionary of American Biography. Thenceforth he was a great American hero...."[23]

26. Fifty-seven percent of the seniors believed that George Washington cut down his father's cherry tree, a story coined by Washington's most popular early

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[23] Dixon Wecter, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

biographer, Weems. Chamber's Encyclopedia says that nothing is known of Washington's childhood notwithstanding the many stories gathered about his name. Dixon Wecter explains in part the story's popularity: "Truth telling...is perennially recommended, therefore Weems most famous yarn is still current."[24]

27. Bunker Hill Monument does not commemorate a victorious battle of the Colonists over the British. About fifty-seven percent of the seniors believed it did. It may have been a moral victory but the colonists had to give up in the end for lack of powder. Paul Klapper states that "Nominally, Bunker Hill was a defeat for the colonists, as they lost the position, and over four hundred men."[25] Later he goes on to say that the battle convinced the American leaders that the colonists were justified in asserting and maintaining their independence of Great Britain.

The battle took its name from Bunker Hill, though it was actually Breed's Hill that was fortified by Colonel Prescott with some 1500 Americans.[26]

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[24] Ibid., p. 134.

[25] Paul Klapper, The Teaching of History, New York, Appleton-Century, 1926, p. 227.

[26] Ibid., p. 223.

28. Lincoln was not a firm abolitionist. Fifty-five percent of the seniors believed that he was.

> "With the fanatics of abolition Lincoln had little patience. In Worcester, Massachusetts, in an impromptu speech in 1848 he had said almost callously of Lovejoy: 'I have heard you have abolitionists here. We have a few in Illinois and we shot one the other day.' Later in December 1859, upon the soil of Kansas , he condemned the violence, bloodshed, and treason of John Brown and felt his execution had been legally just."[27]

29. Fifty-four percent of the seniors thought that the Puritans made a complete break from the Church of England upon arriving at America. The break came afterwards.

> "Although, like the Virginians, the Puritans who settled on the bay were members of the Church of England when they arrived, they had wanted to alter some of its practices and so they separated from it entirely in their new home."[28]

The students, no doubt, confused the Separatist Pilgrims with the Puritans.

30. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first to be President for a third term but not the first president that the majority of the people wanted for a third term, which fifty-three percent of the seniors believed.

31. Over half of the seniors thought that hostilities between the Barbary Pirates and the United States ended in 1805. But, Jefferson's fleet sent over at that

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[27] Dixon Wecter, op. cit., p. 249.

[28] Beard and Beard, op. cit., p. 20.

time were not completely successful. "Even after that there was trouble for the next ten years, although the pirates were beginning to show a wholesome respect for force."[29]

32. The Boston Tea Party was an orderly affair contrary to the belief of over half of the seniors, who thought that it was a spontaneous riot. Channing's account of the Party leads one to infer as much.

> "On December 16, Hutchinson's final declination was communicated to a crowded assembly at the old South Meetinghouse. Instantly, the word was given, a band of Indians boarded the vessels, opened the hatches, hoisted out the tea, and threw it over the side, while two thousand spectators stood approvingly by."[30]

33. Fifty percent of the seniors believed that Braddock's defeat was due to the fact that his soldiers became panic stricken. The reason for this belief may be because of an old account that still exists alleging the cause to panic stricken soldiers who had marched into the wilderness as though on parade.[31]

34. Half of the seniors thought that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed all of the slaves in the United States. Beard explains well why the statement is false:

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[29] Harlow, op. cit., p. 276.

[30] Edward Channing, A History of the United States, New York, Macmillan Company, 1916. Volume III, pp. 132-133.

[31] Sidney Pargellis, "Braddock's Defeat," American Historical Review, 31:253-269, January, 1936.

> "In the Proclamation of Emancipation, issued under his war powers, Lincoln declared thenceforward and forever free all the slaves in the districts of the United States then in arms against the Union. From one point of view this was an empty threat. It freed no slaves in fact. In the loyal districts of the Union slaves remained slaves and in the districts still controlled by Confederate arms, slaves also remained slaves. But the Proclamation electrified the imagination of all who loved liberty and was indeed a move toward the abolition of slavery throughout the United States."[32]

35. Approximately half of the seniors thought that the crime rate is highest among the foreign born, but "the adult immigrant commits considerably fewer crimes than the native born in proportion to their respective numbers."[33]

36. Forty-nine percent of the seniors thought that the Constitution provides for the President's cabinet. The cabinet is not mentioned in the Constitution, although department heads are referred to, which in Washington's administration began to be called a cabinet.

37. A greater percentage, than the writer had expected, of the seniors thought that Massachusetts Bay Colony was known for religious toleration, which may be due to the fact that Americanism is associated with religious freedom and Americanism is thought to have started with the

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[32] Beard and Beard, op. cit., p. 276.

[33] Nathaniel F. Cantor, Crime and Society, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1939. p. 52.

founding of the Bay Colony. Wecter says:

> "...it is plain that neither Plymouth nor Boston, but rather Rhode Island and Connecticut, were the nurseries of New England Liberalism. ....
> ....
> Orthodoxy in Massachusetts, as is well known agreed to whip Quakers and Baptists; to banish Anne Hutchinson, who in her friendless state was slain by the Indians; and to expel saintly Roger Williams .... Too many of the first settlers came, not to set up an asylum of religious liberty for all men, but to establish their own brand of intolerance."[34]

38. Forty-four percent of the seniors thought that the Monroe Doctrine was eagerly accepted by the South American Republics upon its announcement. Dexter Perkin's views confirm the falseness of the statement declaring the Monroe Doctrine as being eagerly accepted by the South American Republics upon its announcement. Perkin's views were:

> "That the Monroe Doctrine had little immediate effect upon the activities of European nations 1823-1826, that the Doctrine was not considered a significant step (as we conceive it today) by Central and South American countries, although it was accepted by them as a means of protection."[35]

39. Forty-three percent of the seniors thought that at the end of the Colonial Period the colonies were racially homogeneous and so prepared for revolt against Great Britain.

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[34] Wecter, op. cit., p. 38.

[35] Blythe, op. cit., p. 397.

It was the lack of homogeneity that helped to bring conflict at the end of the Colonial Period. Faulkner brings out the fact that about a third of the population was not from England.[36]

40. Forty-two percent of the seniors thought that Boston was settled by the Pilgrims. Sometimes even public speakers make the mistake of saying Boston was settled by the Pilgrims, obviously false. Yet, over forty percent of the seniors believed it to be true. This is particularly remarkable because the test was given in New England and most of the students lived within close propinquity of Boston.

41. Forty percent of the seniors believed that the capture of Constantinople was one cause for the discovery of America. Albert Lybyer discovered in 1915 sources which he used to show that the capture of Constantinople in 1453 was not related to the discovery of America. Yet, in Blythe's study, out of fifteen recent high school texts in American history used in her report, only two stated Lybyer's discovery, six made no definite statements as to the effect of the Turks on the discovery of America but implied that they were a cause for the explorations, five gave the traditional view that the capture of Constantinople was important in causing the explorations and

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[36] Faulkner, op. cit., p. 87.

discovery of America.[37]

42. James T. Adams disqualifies the statement that the New England Colonies were politically democratic, which thirty-nine percent of the seniors believed to be true.

> "Here was one of the best parts of the whole continent being monopolized by a band of people who rejected, oppressed, and banished others, or at the least deprived them of all political rights, not because they were undesirable citizens, not because they were immoral, but because they refused to conform to the peculiar church policy and doctrine, neither Church of England nor English Puritan, which the first settlers had evolved in the American wilderness."[38]

43. The destruction of the Maine even now after all of these years is still a mystery. The headlines read at the time said, "The work of an Enemy." Thirty-nine percent of the seniors thought it was proven that the Spanish destroyed the ship.

44. Two documents were issued, one declaring war on Japan, and one declaring war on the Axis powers in the Second World War, contrary to the belief of thirty-eight percent of the seniors.

45. Thirty-seven percent of the seniors thought that the spice motive outweighed other motives of great explorers. Religion, crusading, conquest, and adventure outweighed the

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[37] Blythe, op. cit., p. 397.

[38] James T. Adams, The Founding Fathers of New England, Boston, Atlantic Monthly Press, 1921. p. 173.

spice motive for exploration as revealed by Faulkner.[39]

46. The first Continental Congress met in Philadelphia, not New York. Thirty-six percent of the seniors thought it met in New York.

47. That even twenty-eight percent of the seniors thought that the people vote directly for the President is a surprisingly large number.

48. Twenty percent of the seniors believed that Thanksgiving Day became a national holiday the same year our Constitution was adopted.

> "Not until the dark days of the Civil War--when all the states remaining in the union were more or less friendly to New England traditions--did Thanksgiving become a national holiday on the last Thursday of November 1863...by Lincoln's proclamation."[40]

49. Only a few of the seniors believed that the Thirteenth Amendment which freed the slaves gave the Negroes the same voting privileges as the white people.

50. Nineteen percent of the seniors believed that Daniel Webster wrote the popular Webster's Dictionary.

> "Today, Webster and dictionary are synonymous terms in our language. No tribute can surpass this one.
>
> Yet, curiously enough, although the name Webster is on the tip of every person's tongue who wants to consult that indispensable reference book, the dictionary, few can give the lexicographer's first name. When asked the question, the average informed

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[39] Faulkner, op. cit., p. 84.

[40] Wecter, op. cit., p. 44.

> person looks blank a moment, then hesitantly ventures, 'Daniel, I guess.' Thus Noah Webster, who eminently deserves a niche in the Hall of Fame, not only is memoralized in that pantheon, but has suffered an even worse fate: his name has coalesced with that of the famous orator and statesman who was not even his kinsman."41

Contrary to Warfel's contention, the results of the test show only a small percentage of the seniors who believed that Daniel Webster wrote the Dictionary.

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41 Harry R. Warfel, Noah Webster, Schoolmaster to America, New York, Macmillan Company, 1936. p. 1 (prologue).

Correlation Between Four Variables and the Test Scores

The Pearson Product-Moment Method was employed to determine the degree of relationship existing between each of four variables (age, years a student had American history, mark in history, intelligence quotient) and score.

Table II shows the degree of relationship existing between the four variables and the number of misconceptions held. As has been noted before a negative correlation result is highly probable.

TABLE II

CORRELATION BETWEEN FOUR VARIABLES AND THE NUMBER OF MISCONCEPTIONS HELD BY THE TOTAL GROUP TESTED (EXCEPT FOR IQ'S WHICH WERE NOT OBTAINABLE FOR ALL OF THE SENIORS)

The Four Variables	Coefficient of Correlation
Age Last Birthday	+ .148
Number of Times the Student had American History	- .152
Last mark in a history course	- .28
Intelligence Quotient	- .34

Age and Score.

The result of the computation for the two variables of age and score resulted in a coefficient of correlation of $+ .148$. The standard error for this coefficient of correlation is .048. We may interpret this standard error as meaning that the odds are 2 to 1 that the true r does not lie below $+ .10$ or above $+ .196$.

The coefficient of correlation of .148 shows that there is a slight although not significant negative relationship between the ages of the seniors and the number of misconceptions held.

The majority of the seniors tested were in the seventeen year old group. Table III shows the mean score of the different age groups. Here we find that the mean score showing the least number of misconceptions goes to the sixteen year old seniors. With increase of age, the mean score or number of misconceptions also increased, except for the smallest twenty year old group.

TABLE III

THE NUMBER OF SENIORS, THE MEAN SCORE, AND THE RANGE FOR THE DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

Age	Number	Mean Score	Range
16	26	27.04	18 - 40
17	238	28.74	12 - 40
18	95	30.59	17 - 43
19	35	30.89	19 - 42
20	8	27.75	21 - 34
21	10	33.30	25 - 43

Years of American History and Score.

A correlation of -.152 was found for the two variables, the number of years a student had American history and the number of misconceptions held. Although there is a trace of relationship between the two variables, it is very weak.

The standard error for the correlation was .038. If -.152 is the true r, the odds are about two to one that r's in samples of 411 cases each will fall between -.114 and -.190.

How much faith one should place in this relationship shown by the coefficient of correlation is questionable. Two factors of which the writer is aware would minimize the correlation as an index number.

The first factor was that sixty-six seniors indicated they had had American history only once. The plausible reason for this indication is failure to remember the previous grades in which they had had American history.

The second factor which lessens the value of the coefficient of correlation was the result of the writer's negligence to have the students indicate the number of years a course in American history had been repeated. There were twenty-four seniors who said they had had American history five or six times. This may signify a change from one school system to another, or it may signify

repeated grades where American history was taught. So far as the writer knows there are no school systems in New England offering American history as many as five or six times.

At the time the misconception test was given, all seniors were taking an American history course, except in two high schools in which a total of fifty-five seniors had had American history in Grade XI.

In view of the above factors, the writer cannot justifiably come to the absolute conclusion that there is no relationship whatever between the number of times a student has American history and the number of misconceptions held. For, common sense tells us that the more one is exposed to the truth the fewer the misconceptions he will have. It would take another study and analysis to justify the latter statement.

Mark and Score.

The result of the computation of the Pearson Product-Moment Coefficient of Correlation to find the relation between the two variables, the last mark received in a history course and the number of misconceptions, was a correlation of -.28. The standard error for this coefficient of correlation is .045. The interpretation of this standard error is that the odds are two to one that the

true r does not lie below -.235 or above -.325

This low correlation, like that for the IQ and score, denotes a definite but small relationship.

IQ and Score

Computation to find the relation between the two variables, Intelligence Quotient and score, resulted in a coefficient of correlation of -.34. The standard error for this coefficient of correlation is .045. The interpretation for this standard error is, if -.34 is the true r, the odds are about two to one that r's in samples of 377 cases will fall between -.303 and -.393.

Comparison of Boys' and Girls' Scores.

The mean score for the girls was 31.67 or 63.34 percent wrong. The mean score for the boys was 26.72 or 53.44 percent of the test items wrong. The difference between the sexes of 4.95 misconceptions, or 9.9 percent, indicates that the boys as a whole hold fewer misconceptions than do the girls.

Carle, in 1945, conducted a study of "The interest and knowledge of fifth grade children regarding world affairs," which had similar results. She states, "In regard to differences in how much they knew, results from the total scores of the two groups revealed that the boys

were slightly better informed than the girls."[42]

From Table IV it may readily be seen that the number of misconceptions held by the girls on some items differs from the boys as much as twenty-nine percent. Table IV shows those items on which the difference between the sexes was greatest. The difference between the girls and the boys who got the item wrong was over twenty percent in each case.

TABLE IV

ITEMS ON WHICH BOYS HAD FEWER MISCONCEPTIONS

Item number	Percent of girls holding more misconceptions than the boys
37	29.
43	26.57
32	23.73
27	23.56
22	22.82
12	20.78
28	20.41
26	20.12
47	20.08
30	20.06

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[42] Barbara Carle, "The Interest and Knowledge of Fifth Grade Children Regarding World Affairs," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Boston University, 1945), p. 73.

There are a few items on which the girls excelled, although the difference between sexes was not great. This may be seen from Table V.

TABLE V

ITEMS ON WHICH GIRLS HAD FEWER MISCONCEPTIONS

Item number	Percent of boys holding more misconceptions than the girls
38	9.06
5	6.78
29	4.87
23	1.88
9	.59
2	.56

The items on which the difference was wide between the boys and girls, in favor of the boys, were, in general, items concerning heroes, war, and government. The items on which the girls had fewer misconceptions than the boys were, in general, those that dealt with social aspects of American history.

The boys received better scores than the girls on items of a similar category in Carle's study. A quotation from Carle substantiates this fact: "The boys were better informed, however, on most questions concerning war terms and equipment, concerning strategic places, and the identification of war leaders." 43

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43 Carle, op. cit., p. 74.

Table VI shows the percent of boys and girls having misconceptions on each item of the test.

TABLE VI

PERCENT OF GIRLS AND BOYS HAVING MISCONCEPTIONS ON EACH ITEM OF THE TEST AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM

Item Number	Percent Wrong			
(as in Table I)	Girls	Boys	Difference*	
1	92.66	86.08	6.58	Declaration of Indep.
2	86.24	86.60	-.36	Pilgrims' homes
3	86.70	85.05	1.65	Tobacco first export
4	87.61	81.44	6.17	After Christ's birth
5	79.82	86.60	-6.78	Virginian aristocracy
6	86.24	78.35	7.89	Jefferson and Const.
7	85.32	77.84	7.48	Witches burned
8	83.03	77.84	5.19	1st Negro slaves
9	79.82	80.41	-.59	Qualif. of 15th Amend.
10	85.32	71.13	14.19	Won War 1812
11	80.73	73.71	7.02	Liberty Bell
12	86.24	65.46	20.78	Robert Fulton
13	74.77	75.77	1.00	No Taxation
14	79.82	67.01	12.81	Decade after Lewis and Clark
15	78.90	67.53	11.37	George Rogers Clark
16	77.06	68.56	8.50	17th C Va. large plant.
17	77.52	64.95	12.57	Patrick H. and Const.
18	71.56	70.10	1.46	Stamps of Stamp Act
19	76.15	62.37	13.78	Colonists and indep.
20	69.27	59.28	9.99	Wash. birthday
21	72.02	54.12	17.90	Pocahontas
22	73.85	51.03	22.82	4 Freedoms
23	61.01	62.89	-1.88	Ku Klux Klan
24	64.68	51.55	13.13	"We hold these truths..."
25	58.26	55.67	2.59	Paul Revere
26	66.51	46.39	20.12	Cherry tree
27	67.89	44.33	23.56	Bunker Hill Monument
28	64.22	43.81	20.41	Lincoln abolitionist
29	51.83	56.70	-4.87	Puritans break from ch.
30	62.84	42.78	20.06	Roos. third term
31	53.67	51.03	2.64	Barbary Pirates 1805
32	62.39	38.66	23.73	Boston Tea Party
33	54.13	46.39	7.74	Braddock's defeat

TABLE VI (continued)

PERCENT OF GIRLS AND BOYS HAVING MISCONCEPTIONS ON EACH ITEM OF THE TEST AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM

Item Number	Percent Wrong			
	Girls	Boys	Difference*	
34	52.29	46.91	5.38	Emancipation Proc.
35	52.29	45.88	6.41	Crime rate foreign born
36	50.00	47.42	2.58	President's cabinet
37	61.47	32.47	29.00	Mass. Bay religious toleration
38	39.91	48.97	-9.06	Monroe D. and S. America
39	45.87	40.72	5.15	Racially homogeneous--revolt
40	50.00	32.47	17.53	Boston settled by Pilgrims
41	41.28	38.12	3.14	Constantinople's capture
42	45.41	32.99	12.42	New Eng. politic. democ.
43	51.83	25.26	26.57	Maine destruction
44	41.74	32.99	8.75	War on Axis
45	40.83	32.47	8.36	Desire for spices
46	42.20	28.35	13.85	First Continental Cong.
47	37.61	17.53	20.08	People vote directly for President
48	26.61	12.89	13.72	Thanksgiving Day
49	25.69	12.37	13.32	Thirteenth Amendment
50	24.31	12.89	11.42	Daniel Webster and Dictionary

*A minus sign in front of the percentages in the difference column indicates that the percentage of the boys having misconceptions on the items is greater than the girls.

Parent's Occupation and Score.

Table VII shows the relation of the mean number of misconceptions held by students in relation to the parent's occupation. The father's occupation was classified according to the U. S. Census classification of occupations. In a few instances the mother's occupation was used when students did not indicate their father's occupation.

TABLE VII

MEAN SCORE IN RELATION TO PARENT'S OCCUPATION

	Occupation	Mean Score (No. Wrong)	No. Students
1.	Professional	28.11	88
2.	Clerical	29.27	93
3.	Service	28.59	42
4.	Agriculture	30.11	34
5.	Skilled	30.62	81
6.	Semi-skilled	30.73	41
7.	Unskilled	30.12	16
8.	Retired (or deceased)	27.64	17

The table shows only a point or two of difference in scores of the different parental occupational groups. Children of parents who were classified in the groups of agriculture, skilled, semi-skilled, and unskilled all had about the same mean score of thirty and a fraction. Professional and service groups had an average score of twenty-eight and a fraction. The group whose parent was

retired or deceased received the lowest mean score of 27.64.

The results of the comparison of scores and socio-economic status are in keeping with the results of other investigations where conclusions were that there was little relation between socio-economic status and achievement.

Number of American History Books Read and Score.

The seniors were asked to fill out on the questionnaire sheet the number of biographies, historical novels, and other books dealing with American history that they had read during the school year. In making up Table VIII, the books under the three different headings were combined to obtain a workable total.

TABLE VIII

MEAN SCORE IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN HISTORY BOOKS READ DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Books Read	Mean Score	No. Students
0	29.57	66
1 - 3	30.69	159
4 - 6	29.04	124
7 or more	28.61	63

Thus, we find that seniors who read no books had a mean score of 29.57 which is about one less a point than those who read from one to three books, with a mean score of 30.69. The one point difference is very small but it

cannot be ignored. The table also shows that of those students who had read any books at all about American history (not including the school text), the greater the number read, the greater was the corresponding decrease in the number of misconceptions. The decrease in each instance was a fraction over one point in the four to six group and a fraction under one point in the seven or more group, but each is a decrease, however slight, in the number of misconceptions held.

Number of Comic Books Read and Score.

Table IX gives the comparative performance of seniors who read no comic books and of seniors who read four or more comic books. The difference in the mean score of 3.13 while not great is significant. Seniors reading four or more comics have more misconceptions. Inference from this fact would have one believe that comics might be a cause for some of our popular misconceptions. However, of this group reading four or more comics the mean IQ is 102. Thus, intelligence may be a factor causing the difference in the mean score, rather than the reading of comic books.

TABLE IX

MEAN SCORE IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF COMIC BOOKS DEALING WITH HISTORY READ DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Comic Books Read	Mean Score	No. Students
0	29.02	291
4 or more	32.15	20

Heisler's study, mentioned previously, concluded that there was no significant difference between the achievements of the comic and noncomic book readers. When the achievement means for the noncomic readers was higher, it was found that the mean mental age was also higher. This conclusion agrees with the conclusion of this investigation.

Number of Historical Movies Seen and Score.

Table X shows that the mean score for the group who saw no historical movies during the school year was nearly two points lower than the mean score of the group who saw four or more movies. The evidence is meager but it shows that those who attend historical movies are inclined to have more misconceptions than those who do not and the more movies one attends the greater the number of misconceptions he holds.

TABLE X

MEAN SCORE IN RELATION TO THE NUMBER OF HISTORICAL MOVIES SEEN DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Movies Seen	Mean Score	No. Students
0	28.66	203
1 - 3	29.96	171
4 or more	30.24	38

Tables Showing the Total Right, Total Wrong, and Percent Wrong.

Tables XI, XII, and XIII show the total right, total wrong and the percent wrong for the 412 seniors, for 218 senior girls, and for 194 senior boys on each test item. The items are numbered according to their appearance on the original test and not in the order of the percent having misconceptions as was used in constructing previous tables.

The average score for all 412 seniors is 58.68 percent wrong. The girls' average score is 63.34 percent wrong. The boys' average score is 53.44 percent wrong.

TABLE XI

TABULATION TO SHOW THE TOTAL RIGHT, THE TOTAL WRONG, AND THE PERCENT WRONG ON EACH ITEM FOR 412 SENIORS

Item	Total Right	Total Wrong	Percent Wrong
1	178	234	56.80
2	88	324	78.64
3	209	203	49.27
4	56	356	86.41
5	248	164	39.81
6	260	152	36.89
7	70	342	83.01
8	233	179	43.45
9	117	295	71.60
10	120	292	70.87
11	230	182	44.17
12	125	287	69.66
13	265	147	35.68
14	189	223	54.13
15	58	354	85.92
16	196	216	52.43
17	207	205	49.76
18	72	340	82.53
19	150	262	63.59
20	171	241	58.50
21	157	255	61.89
22	192	220	53.40
23	211	201	48.79
24	177	235	57.04
25	250	162	39.32
26	93	319	77.43
27	329	83	20.15
28	75	337	81.80
29	63	349	84.71
30	215	197	47.82
31	249	163	39.56
32	108	304	73.79
33	152	260	63.11
34	334	78	18.93
35	187	225	54.61
36	204	208	50.49
37	332	80	19.42
38	82	330	80.10
39	109	303	73.54
40	102	310	75.24

TABLE XI (continued)

TABULATION TO SHOW THE TOTAL RIGHT, THE TOTAL WRONG, AND THE PERCENT WRONG ON EACH ITEM FOR 412 SENIORS

Item	Total Right	Total Wrong	Percent Wrong
41	257	155	37.62
42	43	369	89.56
43	240	172	41.75
44	111	301	73.06
45	97	315	76.46
46	296	116	28.16
47	80	332	80.58
48	177	235	57.03
49	146	266	64.56
50	201	211	51.21

Average = 58.68% Wrong

TABLE XII

TABULATION TO SHOW THE TOTAL RIGHT, THE TOTAL WRONG, AND THE PERCENT WRONG ON EACH TEST ITEM FOR 218 SENIOR GIRLS

Item	Total Right	Total Wrong	Percent Wrong
1	70	148	67.89
2	32	186	85.32
3	104	114	52.29
4	30	188	86.24
5	128	90	41.28
6	129	89	40.83
7	44	174	79.82
8	118	100	45.87
9	49	169	77.52
10	62	156	71.56
11	131	87	39.91
12	52	66	76.15
13	126	92	42.20
14	105	113	51.83
15	29	189	86.70
16	101	117	53.67
17	104	114	52.29
18	30	188	86.24
19	61	157	72.02
20	77	141	64.68
21	85	133	61.01
22	81	137	62.84
23	109	109	50.00
24	91	127	58.26
25	105	113	51.83
26	42	176	80.73
27	160	58	26.61
28	32	186	85.32
29	27	191	87.61
30	84	134	61.47
31	119	99	45.41
32	44	174	79.82
33	57	161	73.85
34	165	53	24.31
35	78	140	64.22
36	100	118	54.13
37	162	56	25.69
38	44	174	79.82
39	46	172	78.90
40	55	163	74.77

TABLE XII (continued)

TABULATION TO SHOW THE TOTAL RIGHT, THE TOTAL WRONG, AND THE PERCENT WRONG ON EACH TEST ITEM FOR 218 SENIOR GIRLS

Item	Total Right	Total Wrong	Percent Wrong
41	127	91	41.74
42	16	202	92.66
43	109	109	50.00
44	50	168	77.06
45	30	188	86.24
46	136	82	37.61
47	37	181	83.03
48	73	145	66.51
49	67	151	69.27
50	82	136	62.39

Average - 63.34% Wrong

TABLE XIII

TABULATION TO SHOW THE TOTAL RIGHT, THE TOTAL WRONG, AND THE PERCENT WRONG ON EACH TEST ITEM FOR 194 SENIOR BOYS

Item	Total Right	Total Wrong	Percent Wrong
1	108	86	44.33
2	56	138	71.13
3	105	89	45.88
4	26	168	86.60
5	120	74	38.14
6	131	63	32.47
7	26	168	86.60
8	115	79	40.72
9	68	126	64.95
10	58	136	70.10
11	99	95	48.97
12	73	121	62.37
13	139	55	28.35
14	84	110	56.70
15	29	165	85.05
16	95	99	51.03
17	103	91	46.91
18	42	152	78.35
19	89	105	54.12
20	94	100	51.55
21	72	122	62.89
22	111	83	42.78
23	102	92	49.42
24	86	108	55.67
25	145	49	25.26
26	51	143	73.71
27	169	25	12.89
28	43	151	77.84
29	36	158	81.44
30	131	63	32.47
31	130	64	32.99
32	64	130	67.01
33	95	99	51.03
34	169	25	12.89
35	109	85	43.81
36	104	90	46.39
37	170	24	12.37
38	38	156	80.41
39	63	131	67.53
40	47	147	75.77

TABLE XIII (continued)

TABULATION TO SHOW THE TOTAL RIGHT, THE TOTAL WRONG, AND THE PERCENT WRONG ON EACH TEST ITEM FOR 194 SENIOR BOYS

Item	Total Right	Total Wrong	Percent Wrong
41	130	64	32.99
42	27	167	86.08
43	131	63	32.47
44	61	133	68.56
45	67	127	65.46
46	160	34	17.53
47	43	151	77.84
48	104	90	46.39
49	79	115	59.28
50	119	75	38.66
		Average =	53.44% Wrong

Summary and Conclusions.

The purpose of this study was to find and verify some popular misconceptions about American history and to measure by means of an objective test the extent to which these misconceptions are held by high school seniors.

A misconception test containing one hundred true-false items was constructed, only fifty of which were misconception items to be used in the study. The false items were validated by expert opinion. The test was given to 412 pupils in the twelfth grade in April and May, 1947.

A questionnaire or information sheet was filled out by each student to enable greater analysis about the existence of misconceptions. Factors considered important as a basis for analysis were: age, sex, number of years a course in American history was taken, last mark in a history course, parent's occupation, number of books read during the school year dealing with American history, number of comic books read during the school year dealing with history, and the number of historical movies seen during the school year.

Findings.

1. The definite misconceptions were thirteen in number, being the first thirteen items on the table

containing the items in the order of percent wrong. All items which seventy-five percent or more of the seniors missed were considered as definite misconceptions.

2. Scores on the test formed a normal distribution curve.

3. A coefficient of correlation of .148 between ages and score indicated a slight negative relationship.

4. A coefficient of correlation of -.152 between the years a student had American history and score shows only a very weak relationship.

5. A coefficient of correlation of -.28 between the last mark received in a history course and score, denotes definite but small relationship.

6. A coefficient of correlation of -.34 between IQ and score, denotes definite but small relationship.

7. The boys had fewer misconceptions than the girls, the difference between them being 9.9 percent.

8. There is little or no relation between soci-economic status and the number of misconceptions held.

9. Little difference was found in scores of those who read no book, one to three, four to six, or seven or more books. However, those who read no books had a fewer number of misconceptions than those who read from one to three books, and those who read more than three books showed a decreasing number of misconceptions.

10. Those who read four or more comics had a slightly greater number of misconceptions than those who read none.

11. Those who attended historical movies had a slightly greater number of misconceptions than those who did not.

12. The results indicate that the school systems in different states did not affect the number of misconceptions held. A greater variance was found among schools in each state.

Implications for Teaching.

The investigator has gathered some of the most common misconceptions in American history and has analyzed them to find to what extent they are related to other factors. Teachers must become acquainted with the misunderstandings and misapprehensions that exist and stress the truth in each case. All of the misconceptions used in this study are not of vast importance; those considered most important are starred in Table I.

Limitations of the Study.

1. Many misconception items centered around early periods of American history.

2. The geographic distribution of the students taking the test was not very great.

3. The writer neglected to have those who repeated a course in American history indicate that fact, thus making the correlation less valid.

4. The schools in which the test was administered used different intelligence tests. No attempt was made to equate them in finding the correlation between the score and IQ.

Suggestions for Further Research.

1. In further studies about misconceptions in American history, it would be of great service to examine the popular texts being used to find out to what extent they contribute to the popular misconceptions.

2. It may prove of value to gather misconception items about two subjects (one of them American history) and give them as tests to students to find out if students having the greater number of misconceptions in one subject had a greater number of misconceptions in the other subject.

3. An investigation to determine more fully the difference between grades and the factors that make for the real differences in number of misconceptions held would be valuable.

4. The gathering of important words necessary for the understanding of American history and the testing of students to find out how accurate their concepts of the

words are would prove to be a worthwhile investigation.

5. A controlled experiment using different methods of procedure would aid in determining the best method for reducing the number of misconceptions held.

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APPENDIX

American History Test

Directions for the teacher: The following directions for administering are to be followed in detail. When the tests are finished, each student's intelligence quotient should be recorded at the bottom of the information sheet in the space marked (Int. ____)and the name of the intelligence test on the top paper or on an individuals if the name of the test differs from the group as a whole.

Directions for administering:

The test is to be given in one sitting and the hundred items should not take more than a forty minute period to finish. Care should be taken that each student does his own work. No maps should be in sight of the students.

When all of the students are seated the teacher should say:

"We are going to have a test in American history to see how well you remember some facts from your last course in high school. I am now going to distribute the test which you are to leave face down.

I am also going to distribute an answer sheet. Please make no mark on the answer sheet until I tell you to do so."

When all of the students have received booklets, the teacher should say:

"Now take the answer sheet and fill in your name. Fill in the date (). Fill in your age at your last birthday. Indicate your sex. For class, indicate by the grade number 12. Fill in the name of this school and this city (or town).

Circle the grades in which you have had American history. Some of you may have had American history in grades 5, 7, and 11; if you did you would circle the numbers 5, 7, and 11.

Write in the last mark you received in a history course.

Fill in your father's and mother's occupations. If your mother does not work outside the home, list her as a housewife.

American History Test
(Directions for administering continued)

Circle the number of biographies you have read this school year. In the blank spaces that follow give the author's last name and a brief title of one or two words.

Do the same for the historical novels that you have read this school year.

Circle the number of comic books dealing with any phase of history that you have read this school year and list the names of each of the comic books.

Circle the number of historical movies you have seen this school year and list their titles in the spaces that follow.

On the next page you are to circle the number of books dealing with history that you have read this school year other than biographies, historical novels, and comics. This list should include the non-fiction books such as might deal with the history of the navy. Give the author's last name and a brief title.

This page is also the answer sheet for the test. Write your name at the top of this page.

Read the directions to yourself as I read them with you: 'Same as on the test except that the answers are to be recorded on this sheet. Place a plus (+) after each number if you think the statement with the same number on the test is true; place a zero (0) after each number if you think the statement with the same number on the test is false. A statement must be all true to be marked true. Be sure the number of each answer corresponds to the statement number.'

No turn over your test booklet. Make no marks on this booklet, for others may use it.

Read the directions there as I read them with you. 'Mark with a plus (+) those statements you think are true; place a zero (0) in front of those statements that you think are false.' Note that they are similar to the directions on the answer sheet, the only difference being that you are to mark your answers on the answer sheet.

Be sure to answer all statements even though you may not know the exact answer but have a vague idea.

American History Test
(Directions for administering continued)

Remember not to mark on the test booklet but mark your answers on the answer sheet.

Are there any questions about what you are to do? ( )

No questions will be answered after you begin the test.

You may begin."

AMERICAN HISTORY TEST

Fill these blanks, giving your name age, birthday, etc.
Write plainly.

Name...Date............1947
(Last name, first name, initial)

Age last birthday..........years. Sex....................Class.....
(Male or Female)

School....................................City...........................

Circle the grades in which you have had American history:
5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

What was the last mark you had in a history course?.................

What is your father's occupation?..................................

What is your mother's occupation?..................................

Circle the number of each of the following that you have read this school year. List the authors and titles of the biographies and historical novels.

Biographies; 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Historical Novels: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Comic books dealing with history: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
List the names of the comic books:

Circle the number of historical movies you have seen this school year:
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
List the names of the historical movies:

(Int.______________)

American History Test Name____________

Circle the number of books you have read this school year dealing with history other than biographies, historical novels, and comics.
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 List the author and title of each.

____________ ____________ ____________

____________ ____________ ____________

AMERICAN HISTORY TEST ANSWER FORM

Directions: Same as on the test except that the answers are to be recorded on this sheet. Place a plus (+) after each number if you think the statement with the same number on the test is true; place a zero (0) after each number if you think the statement with the same number on the test is false. A statement must be all true to be marked true. Be sure the number of each answer corresponds to the statement number.

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ACHIEVEMENT TEST IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Directions: Mark with a plus (✓) those statements you think are true; place a zero (0) in front of those statements that you think are false.

___1. Daniel Webster felt that the Northern abolitionists had done more harm than good for the cause of slavery.

___2. Congress and President Lincoln proposed to give financial aid to any state that would adopt gradual abolition of slavery.

___3. Bunker Hill Monument commemorates a victorious battle of the colonists over the British.

___4. The Navigation Acts stimulated New England industry.

___5. The Danish island, Greenland, a strategic military base in this air age is smaller than Australia.

___6. The criminal code of New England in the Colonial Period was enforced with less severity than in the other colonies.

___7. The phrase "a government of, by, and for the people" is of medieval origin.

___8. The United States won the War of 1812.

___9. The crime rate in the United States is highest among the foreign born.

___10. The Pilgrims' homes at Plymouth were log cabins.

___11. Harvard University was established primarily for training Congregationalist ministers.

___12. The states' right argument, resulting in secession, was not the exclusive doctrine of the South but was a doctrine advanced by all the states when self interests conflicted with federal policy.

___13. Thomas Paine got only ingratitude from the Republic he had helped to establish.

___14. American pioneers in Oregon were an important factor in the Compromise of 1846 with England.

___15. Benjamin Franklin was in London the ten years before the Revolution to attempt to persuade England to treat the American colonists fairly.

___16. The capture of Constantinople was one cause for the discovery of America.

___17. The Articles of Confederation would allow Canada to come into the Union at will but the states were required to have a two-thirds majority.

____18. The Northwest joined the South in favoring the annexation of Texas.

____19. The annexation of Texas was Mexico's chief grievance in the controversy which led to war with the United States.

____20. Merchant ships owned by United States citizens are required to pay tolls when passing through the Panama Canal.

____21. Local government was not organized for the District of Columbia until after the Civil War.

____22. An act of Congress has authorized the United States' mint to make coins for foreign nations.

____23. The international prime meridian was decided upon a few decades after the Civil War.

____24. The desire to obtain spices for food preservation outweighed other motives of the great explorers.

____25. Virginian aristocracy was primarily recruited from the nobility of England.

____26. Woodrow Wilson became President in 1913.

____27. The Charter of the United Nations was drafted by the United Nations' Conference on International Organization in San Francisco, California in 1945.

____28. Jane Addams was a pioneer in the war against poverty.

____29. At the end of the Colonial Period the colonies were racially homogenious and so prepared for revolt against Great Britain.

____30. The United States paid a large sum of money to Spain for the transfer of the Philippines.

____31. The Puritans who came to America were a highly educated group of people.

____32. The Pilgrim Fathers first established a communal system at Plymouth.

____33. Patrick Henry the devout patriot of "Give me liberty, or give me death" promoted the acceptance of the Constitution as a liberty-making document.

____34. United States' foreign affairs are conducted through the State Department.

____35. The hopes of President Wilson for the membership of the United States in the League of Nations were barred by the Senate.

____36. The Social Security Act encouraged unemployment insurance and provided old-age pensions.

___37. The Stamp Act required the use of stamps like our postage stamps on the legal documents.

___38. The Monroe Doctrine was eagerly accepted by the South American Republics upon its announcement.

___39. The majority of the colonists exhibited a desire for independence by April 19, 1775.

___40. The first Continental Congress met in New York.

___41. Upon arriving in America, the Puritans made a complete break with the Church of England.

___42. Tobacco was the first commodity to be exported from Virginia.

___43. Hostilities between the United States and the Barbary Pirates ended in 1805.

___44. The initiative, referendum, and recall are democratic tools used by some states.

___45. One of the purposes of the New England Confederation was for protection against the Indians.

___46. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed all of the slaves in the United States.

___47. Thomas Jefferson helped to frame the Constitution.

___48. It is a well established fact that Pocahontas saved Captain John Smith's life.

___49. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" is a part of our written constitution.

___50. Cotton was not important as an export before 1800.

___51. The Ku Klux Klan was originated for the purpose of controlling the Negro population.

___52. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first President that the majority of the people wanted for the third term.

___53. Colonial transportation before 1760 was chiefly by boat.

___54. Women were not admitted to the early American colleges.

___55. The Constitution provides for the President's Cabinet.

___56. Paul Revere gained nation-wide fame before 1872.

___57. The destruction of the Maine was proven to be the work of the enemy, Spain.

___58. The First Continental Congress was summoned to protest against the Intolerable Acts.

___59. The Battle of Lexington and Concord was fought before the Declaration of Independence was signed.

___60. John C. Calhoun was a firm believer in the states' rights theory of government.

___61."Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" was inscribed on Liberty Bell at the time of and in commemoration of our independence from England.

___62. Thanksgiving Day became a national holiday the same year our Constitution was adopted.

___63. Witches were burned at stake by the colonists at Salem, Mass.

___64. One thousand, four hundred and ninety two years after Christ was born, Columbus discovered America.

___65. Massachusetts Bay Colony was known for its religious toleration.

___66. The Dred Scott Decision opened all territories to slavery.

___67. The New England Colonies were politically democratic.

___68. Lincoln received a minority of the popular vote in 1860.

___69. The income tax feature of the Wilson tariff was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.

___70. The Sugar Act and the Stamp Act were for the purpose of providing the British treasury with money to pay expenses of governing, defending, and protecting the colonies in America.

___71. Spain and Holland actively supported the American cause for independence.

___72. The decade following the Lewis and Clark Expedition was one of rapid expansion and settlement in Oregon.

___73. The four freedoms (freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from fear, freedom from want) are stated and guaranteed in the first of the ten amend~~mend~~ments to the Constitution.

___74. Under the Confederacy, small states had as many votes as large states.

___75. Daniel Webster wrote the popular Webster's Dictionary.

___76. Lincoln was a firm abolitionist.

___77. Braddock's defeat was due to the fact that his soldiers became panic stricken.

___78. The first capital of the new government was New York City where Washington was inaugurated on April 30, 1789.

____ 79. The first U. S. Bank, with the central office in Philadelphia, was a joint-stock concern, the major portion of the stock being subscribed by private investor.

____ 80. The thirteenth amendment which freed the slaves gave the negroes the same voting priviliges as the white people.

____ 81. The qualifications in the 15th amendment "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous servitude--" guaranteed the negroes the same voting power as the white people.

____ 82. George Rogers Clark was one of the leaders of the Lewis and Clark expedition to Oregon.

____ 83. The fur trade was both the incentive to the development of New France and the motivating force in its final collapse.

____ 84. In 1774, the colonists' slogan "No taxation without representation" expressed their desire to be represented in the English Parliament.

____ 85. Benedict Arnold was a brilliant officer and on his record prior to his act of treason, might reasonably have had a position second to that of Washington.

____ 86. The United States declared war on the Axis powers in the same document which declared war against Japan in 1941.

____ 87. The Declaration of Independence was signed July 4, 1776.

____ 88. Boston was settled by the Pilgrims.

____ 89. The Democratic Party was known as the Republican Party when it came into power in 1801.

____ 90. Theodore Roosevelt thought that trusts and monopolies should be allowed to develop but regulated carefully by the government.

____ 91. Since 1817 the Canadian boundary line has been unfortified.

____ 92. Slavery originally was legal in all of the thirteen states.

____ 93. Seventeenth century Virginia was a colony of large plantations.

____ 94. Robert Fulton invented the first steamboat.

____ 95. The people of the United States vote directly for the President.

____ 96. The famous Webster Hayne debate in the Senate (Jan. 1830) was over the constitutional basis of the Union.

____ 97. The first Negroes in Virginia in 1619 were slaves.

____ 98. George Washington cut down his father's cherry tree with a hatchet.

___ 99. As a boy, George Washington celebrated his birthday on February 22.

___100. The Boston Tea Party was a spontaneous riot.

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